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Green Lake's centennial resident

By CHARMAINE ADSERO

Anna T. McLaren remembers walking across Green Lake when it was frozen solid. Twice. Once in 1930 or so. The other time she can't quite recall. She remembers the days when a trolley ran all the way around the lake, connecting the small neighborhoods of Green Lake, Fremont, and the University District with the big city. The trolley ran on trestles in places, she says. And the hardware and dry goods stores were going concerns then.

"I am so grateful that I can still remember most things," Anna said. "So many of my friends were unable to remember even their own families toward the end of their lives."

Anna's memory is her pride and joy. And rightfully so, as she celebrates her 100th birthday on July 16. Friends and family will fly to Seattle from all over the country to join her next month.

Anna laughs about her age. "It just goes to show that longevity has come to this earth," she said. "My great-grandfather died when he was 72 and people thought it was a miracle that he had lived so long."

Anna, if not the oldest Green Lake resident, is surely one of them. She has lived on a quiet street just a few blocks from the lake for the past 53 years.

Anna and her late husband, George Luther McLaren moved to the neighborhood because it was so peaceful and lovely, she said. "I don't know what it was that first brought me here, but it was so beautiful I decided to stay," she admits

In those days, the surrounding community was almost rural. "There were a lot of small farm houses and orchards around back," said Anna. "But it's still nice and quiet here. This street hasn't changed as much as a lot of other places have, although I have watched it fill up with cars over the years." She remembers seeing the now 70-foot monkey puzzle tree across the street planted when it was only four feet tall.

Photo/Charmaine Adsero

Anna T. McLaren, sitting in her Green Lake home, will celebrate her 100th birthday on July 16.

Anna Thomas arrived in Seattle in 1915. Born in Kansas City on July 16, 1889, Anna moved to Vancouver, B.C. after the deaths of her parents. Her father, Charles Leedom Thomas, a railroad engineer, was killed in a train crash when she was a teen-ager. She says her mother, Mary Elizabeth Thomas, grieved herself to death. shortly afterward.

"I had no reason to stay there after that," she said. "I had an aunt who ran a boarding house for young men in Vancouver. She and my cousin urged me to stay with them. So I did."

She says the trip changed her life. "I was so shy before then I couldn't look people in the face," she said. During her stay, she developed enough poise to accompany her cousin Nelle, a singer, on the piano. She describes Nelle as a "beautiful singer" who was well known throughout Vancouver. "I was very happy, then," Anna said.

"But then the war came and Canada took all its young men away. They entered the war before us. My aunt was left with a huge, beautiful old English boarding house with no one to rent it."

The family moved to Seattle in 1915 and Anna took a few business courses that eventually landed her a job with Seattle Hardware. It was there that she met her husband, George Luther McLaren. They were married in 1918.

George was a big, friendly guy that everybody liked, she said. They had a happy marriage filled with travel and friends. They had no children, but always had plenty of dogs. And they had each other.

The McLarens were married for 42 years. George died in 1960. At the time, she was terrified of a future without him, she said.

"I was always a terrible coward about being alone," said Anna. "But I realized

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